



# APPS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The top twenty apps on your smartphone that support green living

October 2014

The huge popularity of smart phones and the access apps give to a broad range of people, can be taken advantage of to improve sustainability. But which ones support a low carbon resource efficient, more sustainable way of living? We produced a subjective scoring system to reveal the best 20 apps that bring sustainability to everyday lives.

The apps that scored the highest do one of five things:

1. Encourage reuse and selling on of second hand goods (eBay, Gumtree)
2. Reduce fuel consumption and promote public transport (CityMapper)
3. Change eating habits and reduce food waste (Love Food Hate Waste)
4. Help consumers create more sustainable product choices (Good Guide)
5. Replace material with electronic consumption (Spotify, Kindle)

eBay ranked the highest due to its huge popularity and simple ability to make it easy to buy and sell second hand goods – promoting reuse, long product life and avoiding the need to buy new.

## HOW DID WE RATE THE APPS?


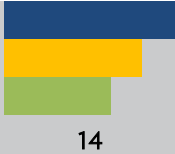

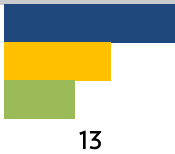

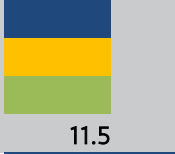

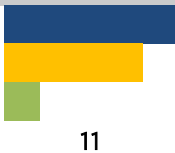

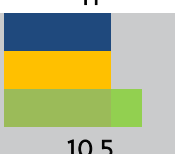

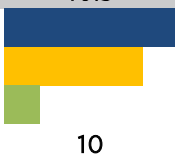



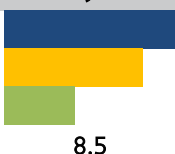



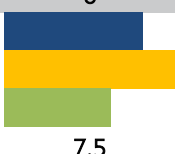

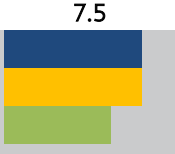
To create our top twenty, we used a scoring system based on three factors:

1. **The number of worldwide downloads.** Green or not, the more times an app's downloaded, the more phones it's on, the greater potential for impact. We counted both Android and iOS worldwide downloads.
2. **Stickability.** Some apps are downloaded, then deleted. Others are used once and that's it. Others are the go to apps regularly used far and wide. We looked at the app functionality, average app rating across both formats, and also user comments to gauge how useful and used each app is.
3. **Green impact.** We scored each app according to the potential environmental impact of a British user using the app (see below). We defined impact broadly and focussed principally on the positive personal impact that the app has. Apps with no definable green impact scored zero (Angry Birds). Apps which have a large impact scored the maximum impact (Good Fish Guide).

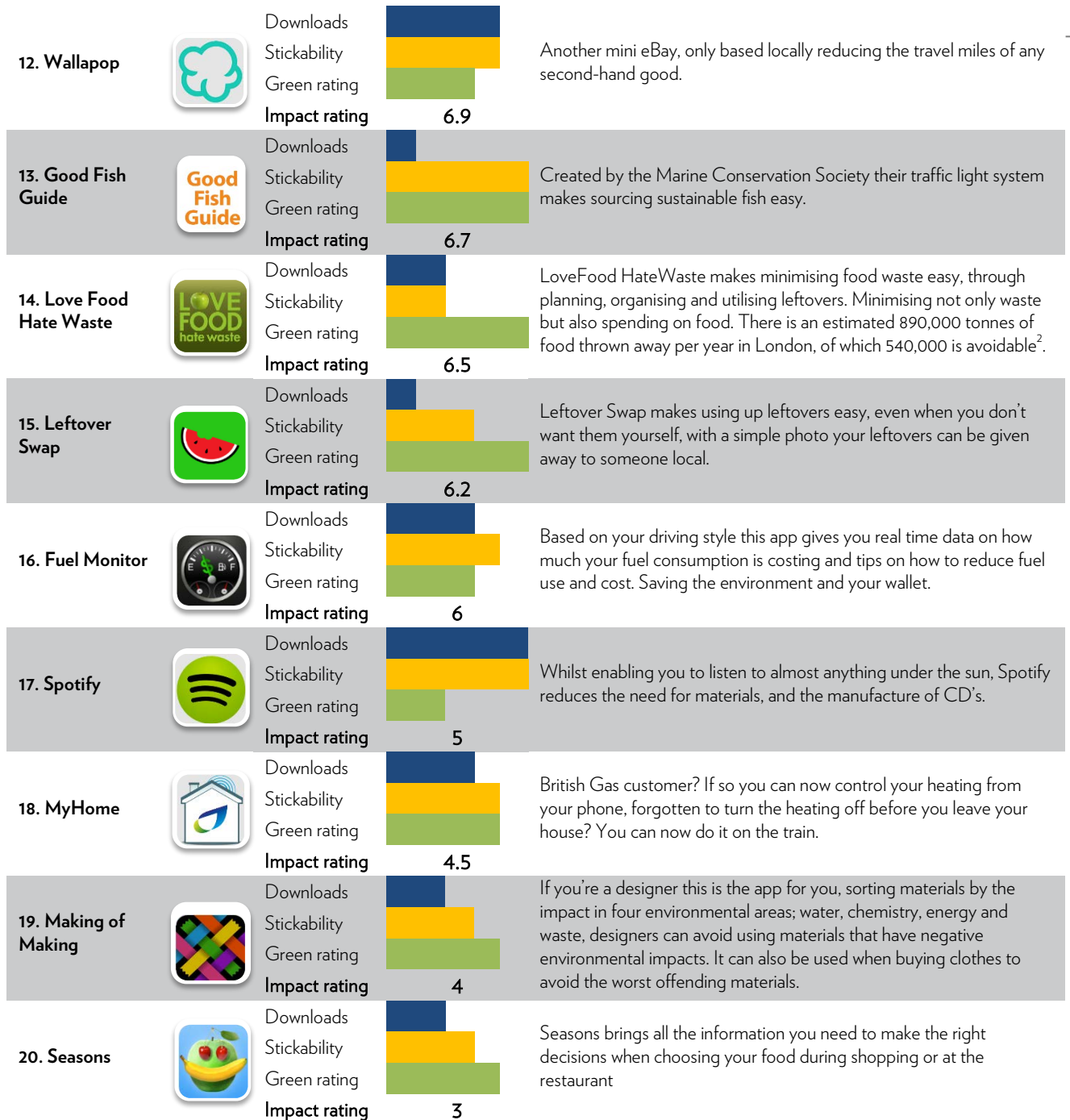
We multiplied the scores for each rating together to create a final ranking.

0	No environmental impact (other than the use of smartphone energy)
1	The underlying use promotes a marginal sustainable behaviour. There may be other parts of the app which don't promote sustainability. Other factors could include content that is rarely updated and/or sustainability relies on user implementing information.
2	The underlying use promotes a limited sustainable behaviour. There may be other parts of the app which don't promote sustainability. Other factors could include content that is up to date and/or sustainability output relies on user implementing information.
3	The underlying use promotes some sustainable behaviour, with regularly updated and accurate content.
4	The underlying use promotes a good sustainable behaviour that will have a lasting effect, with regularly updated and accurate content. Green living likely to be a core purpose of the app.
5	The ongoing use of the app promotes strong sustainable behaviour and choices, the platform is regularly updated and has a direct tangible sustainability link. Green living is a core purpose of the app.

# OUR TOP 20

1. eBay		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Emptying out the loft? Searching for vintage clothes? eBay's the second hand store bar none. Yes we know it sells lots of new stuff too, and it scores highest with us for its impact on product reuse, and making it quick and simple to sell and buy second-hand.
2. Kindle		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Not the device but the app. Kindle's one of the largest downloaded apps for smartphones and tablets. Kindle cuts down on physical book and magazine production, a single book generating 7.5 kg of carbon dioxide. If Kindle's here to stay – reading it via your smartphone or tablet app is a better approach than buying another reading device.
3. GoodGuide		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Unilever or P&G? Cadbury's or Nestle? GoodGuide's the most authoritative source of sustainable product information on the web. Currently mostly based in US. Would score higher with more UK focussed content.
4. Skype		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Travelling's great. Except it's not always necessary. Skype's phone and video conferencing app makes mobile communication easier. So you don't have to get on that plane. Letting you spend more times with your family and friends.
5. Seafood Watch		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Sea bass? Tuna? Seafood Watch is the go to source of information on sustainable fish.
6. Google Maps		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Probably the most downloaded app on the web, and one of the most widely used. Plans the best route, stops you getting lost. Saves time, stress and fuel. A study by NAVTEQ found that people using GPS systems used 12% less fuel than those that were not guided by GPS systems.
7. Freecycle + Trash Nothing		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Freecycle's a mini eBay working for free and in the local community. Spare high chair? Old bed frame? Freecycle helps find a new home – cutting waste, saving buying new. Their Facebook page is pretty neat too.
8. AirBNB		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Travelling away? Stay in a spare room rather than a hotel. A more interesting stay, using properties there already. And according to their stats, AirBnb properties use 78% less energy per guest per night than hotels in Europe and 48% less water per guest per night <sup>1</sup> .
9. Moovit		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Planning public transport's a faff, especially if you're away from home. Moovit makes it easier – bringing public transport data into a single app and journey planner, for across the UK.
10. CityMapper		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Like Moovit, CityMapper makes it easier to get out the car. Big in the US, but London only at the moment in the UK.
11. Gumtree		Downloads Stickability Green rating <b>Impact rating</b>		Another mini eBay. We love it.

<sup>1</sup> <http://blog.airbnb.com/environmental-impacts-of-home-sharing/>



## Were the results surprising?

There will be some who think that the only truly sustainable apps are the ones which overtly contribute to an eco-friendly life. But this would be too snifty, too middle class or too deep green. Moving to a sustainable society means mainstreaming green living while living in a positive, can do environment with higher standards of living. Sustainable living has to be mainstream, so for that reason the popular apps today are the role models. Not the apps that tell customers to stop doing things. They are not cumbersome or hard to use. This is why we embrace the mainstream apps. For us eBay, Kindle, Airbnb are the role models. Critics will claim that there are downsides to every one of these. eBay sells new stuff. Airbnb encourages even more travel, that all these apps weren't created with green living in mind. We won't dispute these arguments, but we do say these are the apps that are the role models for the sustainable sharing society. Developers take note. Which aspect of our everyday lives will be open to new and more sustainable apps?

## Share your thoughts

Do you agree with our ranking? Are there apps that we should be including in our next edition? Contribute to our discussion boards and drop us an email with your thoughts.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s37350/Food%20Waste%20Paper.pdf>

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